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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2021  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [LO](#)  
SUBJECT: CANDIDATE LISTS TAKE SHAPE: SAME GUYS, DIFFERENT  
DAY

REF: BRATISLAVA 0165

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (SBU) As Slovakia's political parties near the March 19 deadline for submitting candidate lists, most of the major parties have announced their lineups. So far, there have been few surprises. The conservative Christian Democratic Party (KDH, which currently holds 18 seats in parliament) submitted a list led by former Chairman of parliament Pavol Hrusovsky, former Minister of Interior Vladimir Palko, and former Minister of Justice Daniel Lipsic. Public commentary focused on the disconnect between KDH's emphasis on "family, which begins with a man and a woman" and the fact that there were only four female candidates in the party's top 20 (at positions 15, 16, 17, and 19).

¶2. (C) The Slovak Hungarian Coalition (SMK) made the fewest changes to its list, mostly re-ordering candidates to increase the influence of the nationalist side of the party. Several SMK members, including NGO activists and MP Pal Farkas, expressed concern about the increasingly nationalistic tendency. Hungarian nationalist Miklos Duray, who is supported morally and financially by Victor Orban, is increasing his rhetoric in favor of autonomy. The party isn't offering solutions to its voters real problems, claimed Farkas; it is mostly a platform for leaders to advance their own economic interests. Farkas predicted that nothing will change if the SMK stays in government.

¶3. (C) Prime Minister Dzurinda's Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) seems slightly more "courageous," including several new faces among its top 20 (among them, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Iveta Radicova, Minister of Justice Lucia Zitnanska, government plenipotentiary for Euro accession Ivan Stefanec, and former pollster and Dzurinda policy advisor Tana Rosova). Their candidate list indicates a "media friendly" SDKU campaign, though some analysts wonder how the crew would fare as opposition members. SDKU deputy Roman Vavrik, bitter at being left off the new candidate list, told us Dzurinda used early elections to bypass traditional party primaries, instead stacking the list with friends and allies (COMMENT: Vavrik is widely believed to be corrupt, and we believe it was smart for SDKU to sideline him. END COMMENT). Also notable in his absence from the SDKU roster is former Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Ludovit Kanik, who was chairman of the Democratic Party (DS) and spearheaded its merger with SDKU last year, but who resigned in shame for misdirecting EU funds towards his brother's business.

¶4. (SBU) Robert Fico's Smer party has not yet published its complete candidate list, but did announce its top 20 positions. Member of European Parliament Monika Benova -- who had been in the second position -- resigned her position and announced that she will not seek a parliamentary seat, but would rather focus on seeking a position in the cabinet

as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the event Smer forms a coalition. She then announced March 17 that she would no longer be seeking the Ministerial position, either, apparently as a result of intra-party disputes (to be reported septel). The highest ranking former-SDL member included on the Smer list occupies an unrealistic position on the list, at 79.

15. (SBU) While there was no mystery surrounding who would emerge in the top slot on former PM Vladimir Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) list, Meciar did keep pundits guessing by holding positions 2 and 3 open, to be filled at a later time. HZDS' list was free from MPs with scandalous media potential, including party loyalists instead.

16. (C) We also met with Free Forum (SF) member Lubica Navratilova, who said that SF is focusing on education, health care, and social issues. Active in 8 regional capitals (but not the countryside), SF believes they are taking voters from ANO and SDKU, and expects to gain 8 percent of the vote on election day. SF hopes to be in a right-leaning government with SMK, KDH, and SDKU ("under the right conditions"). With a foreign policy that is notably similar to SDKU's, they tell us that their foreign policy advisor is a diplomat currently overseas (COMMENT: All indications point to current Slovak Ambassador to the U.S. Rastislav Kacer (reftel). END COMMENT).  
VALLEE